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NEW ANESTHESIA TEAMS TO REDUCE PATIENT WAIT TIMES FOR SURGERIES

McGuinty Government Unveils Collaborative New Team Approach To Counter Anesthesiologist Shortage

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is reducing surgical wait times with the creation of Anesthesia Care Teams and two new roles for anesthesia-related health care workers, Health and Long Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"The McGuinty government is partnering with health care providers to help increase patient access to surgeries," said Smitherman. "The creation of Anesthesia Care Teams is an innovative approach that helps address the shortage of Anesthesiologists in Ontario as we maximize the skills and experience of trained professionals to provide greater surgical support."

Anesthesia Care Teams are a collaboration between Anesthesiologists and two innovative new health care roles, Anesthesia Assistants (AAs) and Nurse Practitioners-Anesthesia. These teams are created as part of the government's HealthForceOntario Health Human Resources Strategy.

Anesthesia Care Teams will increase access and decrease wait times for surgical procedures by increasing the number of trained anesthesia professionals in the health care system. Nine pilot sites are being established across the province.

The pilot sites are located at:

- Halton Healthcare Services
- London Health Sciences Centre
- Royal Victoria Hospital
- Sault Area Hospital
- Southeastern Ontario Medical Organization (Kingston)
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- The Ottawa Hospital
- Toronto East General Hospital
- University Health Network

Anesthesia Care Teams grew out of recommendations made by the joint Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Ontario Medical Association Operative Anesthesia Committee (OAC), chaired by Dr. Jack Kitts. Details are provided in the OAC report *Transforming the Delivery of Anesthesia Services in Ontario.*

Anesthesia Assistants are trained health professionals who provide technical and operational support to the anesthesiologist.

"The training received by Anesthesia Assistants will allow them to work collaboratively with

Anesthesiologists, increasing coverage and effectiveness in the operating room," said Paul Gamble, CEO of the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences. "We believe that incorporating Anesthesia Assistants into the anesthesia care teams will create a valuable partnership, leading to better results."

The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences received $1.35 million to create Ontario's first certificate Anesthesia Assistant Graduate Certificate Program. The first class recently graduated from this 22-week program and some individuals are already working in their new role.

Nurse Practitioners-Anesthesia are registered nurses with advanced preparation at a Masters level who will take part in the provision of anaesthesia care. The government is providing the University of Toronto with funding to establish a joint program between the faculties of Nursing and Medicine to provide a comprehensive curriculum required for Nurse Practitioners-Anesthesia to participate in the Anesthesia Care Teams.

"We're proud to be a part of this innovative approach to delivering health care," said Sioban Nelson, University of Toronto Dean of Nursing. "Our graduates will fill a great need and make a significant contribution towards strengthening health care in Ontario."

"Nurses are eager to increase their contribution to improved health care access for all Ontarians" said Doris Grinspun, Executive Director of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO).

"Anesthesiologists are delighted to lead the newly developed Anesthesia Care Teams, which will include graduates from the Michener Institute and from the University of Toronto's Advanced Practice Nursing program, in providing outstanding care to Ontario's patients," said Dr. Stephen Brown, Chair of the Ontario Medical Association Section on Anesthesiology.

This is the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families who want improved access to health care professionals. Other initiatives include:

- A 23 per cent increase in medical school enrolment
- The creation of 150 Family Health Teams, which will improve access to primary care for more than 2.5 million Ontarians in 112 communities.
- More than doubling the number of training and assessment positions for international medical graduates from 90 in 2003 to 200 today
- Developing a comprehensive nursing strategy designed to make Ontario the employer of choice for nurses including:
  - The opportunity for a full-time job opportunity for all nursing graduates starting in 2007
  - Moving to 70% full-time employment for all nurses
  - A program for late-career nurses
- Reinforcing the new fully inter-professional curriculum at the Michener Institute, funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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